National STAND DOWN

Program Design

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Acknowledgments

Stand Down has drawn together many wonderful, dedicated volunteers over its twenty year history, and we've become an extended family. There are so many people that have touched me personally that I couldn't possibly thank them all ... but I would like to recognize a few very special folks:

First off, Robert Van Keuren, my partner and lifelong friend – simply put, without Robert there would be no Stand Downs.

Ron Stark, our logistics coordinator, site engineer and so much more; Chaplain Darcy Pavich, our Stand Down Coordinator, who keeps us all on course; Marilyn Cornell, our charismatic tent-leader coordinator; Dr. Arnie Gass, our most excellent medical director; Al Pavich, CEO of Veteran's Village of San Diego (VVSD), who has taken this program to heart, and rescued it, whenever necessary; Steve Binder, who took our homeless court program to the whole country; Barb Potts, our savvy operations manager; Jim Hickman, VVSD's ingenious facilities manager; Missy Schmidt, our gifted children's tent coordinator; Tony Carvajal, our medical tent coordinator; Jody Willey and Jim Turner, our resourceful security leaders; Andre Simpson, our tireless volunteer coordinator; Dick Talbott, a former VVSD CEO and coauthor of the original Stand Down logistics manual; Dr. Rachel Goldenhar, Stand Down volunteer, colleague and manual editor; Jo Sortelli, a very special volunteer who provided most of the pictures for this manual, and my daughters, Emily and Rebecca, who played under the Stand Down stage when they were little and grew to be wise, amazing people. Finally, I'd like to dedicate this little book to Sharon, my beautiful wife, who has lovingly supported me and my crazy ideas for all the years of our marriage. Without her, I might have ended up as one more struggling Army vet, looking for a Stand Down on the streets of America.

PREFACE

by Robert Van Keuren

Stand Down Cofounder and Vietnam Vet

Stand Down needed a heart. Something to bring it to life. Something to make it more than a vast and complex assemblage of canvas covered shelter beds, a chow hall and port-a-potties standing at the ready. More than a mountain of donated clothing, endless piles of tables and chairs, miles of wiring, yellow caution tape and a standing virtual army of volunteers and homeless vets eager to advance and occupy our newly created encampment.

It needed a HEART.

Enter Dr. Jon and his concept of creating a community. Not just any community, but THEIR community. A community that was of and about the homeless vets and volunteers that were going to join together in this grand experiment on the athletic field of San Diego High School for those fateful 3 days in the summer of 1988.

Stand Down Founders: Robert Van Keuren and Jon Nachison

Without Jon's vision of creating and bringing to life a true Community and its brother-in-arms, Empowerment, Stand Down would have been no more than a rest stop on the dusty road of Hopelessness that homeless veterans

had been trudging down. The event would have come and gone, disappearing faster than the free ball caps we were giving out.

But Stand Down has not disappeared. It has become the most effective, successful and yes .... HEART-filled intervention program in the country to outreach to and engage homeless veterans. It has grown from its humble start in San Diego and has spread all across the nation – from San Francisco, California to Albany, New York – from Miami, Florida to Portland, Oregon and hundreds of communities in between.

In the pages that follow, Dr. Jon will take you on a walk through the Stand Down encampment and the program he created that has helped to inspire and bring hope to those who have proudly worn the uniform of our nation and found themselves homeless on the streets of America.
And that took a lot of HEART.

San Diego Stand Down 1989

INTRODUCTION

When Robert Van Keuren and I first proposed to bring hundreds of homeless men and women into a secure enclosure and live together with them for three days and two nights, people told us we were crazy. “They’ll kill each other and kill you!” The reality is that a wonderful, peaceful community of veterans and volunteers evolves that brings people back year after year. This document is intended to examine the program that creates that community, and the thinking behind each of the program elements. (A thorough how-to manual focused specifically on the logistics of creating a Stand Down is already available from Veterans Village of San Diego’s website: http://www.vvsd.net).

Description: Stand Down is a military term designating that a combat unit is temporarily moved out of the field and back to base camp for rest and rehabilitation. Homeless veterans are, in some ways, comparable to soldiers in a war zone – living exposed in the field, surviving by their wits with limited rations, enduring extreme conditions. Life on the street is both dangerous and debilitating and for many veterans leads to a self-generating cycle of despair and isolation. Stand Down was designed as an intervention to bring a wide range of essential services to homeless veterans, while raising their morale and awakening their motivation.

The San Diego Stand Down is an annual three day tent city that serves over 800 men, women and children and provides shelter, medical, dental, legal, clothing, showers, haircuts, food, counseling, employment and other needed services. Stand Down is designed to create a transformational

community of participants, service providers and volunteers that is based on dignity, respect and empowerment. The event typically employs 1,500 to 2,000 volunteers each year from agencies, service organizations, active duty military, universities and hospitals throughout San Diego County. Volunteers return year after year to be part of the program in spite of the demanding time commitment, and an ever-increasing number of successful former homeless participants return each year to become volunteers. Stand Down in San Diego has evolved into a grass roots effort that has spread to over 200 American cities and led to a national recognition of the plight of homeless veterans.

This guide is not meant to be exhaustive, nor is it intended to discount the innovative Stand Downs that are already occurring throughout America. Sometimes, however, the logistical demands of establishing a Stand Down in a new community, or sustaining an event year after year, can be so overwhelming that little energy is left to create more than a schedule of events. My hope is that this manual can act as a guide to maximize the healing potential of a Stand Down and take your program to another level. As a psychologist, I've been more action-oriented than reflective; I'd rather be working out in the field than writing about it, but after almost 20 years of the Stand Down phenomena, this guide is long overdue.

Homeless Veterans:

There's been a number of stereotypes of homeless veterans that have evolved into self-fulfilling prophecies and affected public policy. One characterization is that the majority are alcoholics or drug addicts, and that's the primary reason they are homeless. In most cases, it's the reverse that's true – they are substance abusers because they are homeless and addiction compounds whatever other issues they struggle with. The importance of this distinction is that, all too often, people who are homeless are

written off as being too unmotivated or debilitated to be helped. A similar characterization is that the vast majority of people on the street are seriously mentally ill and are the end result of de-institutionalization. My experience over 20 years of working with homeless veterans is that it's common to see Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) symptoms as a result of a history on the street and in the military, but serious mental illness is overestimated. There are definitely veterans suffering with schizophrenia, schizoaffective, and bipolar disorder, but I believe that they are far fewer in number than is typically reported. It doesn't take long for people to appear disorganized and test poorly on a psychiatric Mental Status Exam once they become homeless. If substance abuse is included in the list of serious disorders, and given the same weight as an inherited condition, then it's likely that up to eighty percent of all homeless veterans will be identified as having a mental illness.

At Stand Down, we work to acknowledge the healthier parts of people, and their overt symptoms of mental illness tend to evaporate. There is an active counseling tent adjacent to our medical center and psychologists, social workers and psychiatrists are available for emergencies, but most of the real treatment is taking place on the field. We generally discover few floridly psychotic people each year. Often they clear during the three days, and we let them participate at whatever level they can. 5150 is usually reserved for the rare hostile person, who is endangering others.

There are not a lot of housing options for someone who is homeless in San Diego. There are substance abuse recovery beds if you have an addiction,

and crisis houses and hospitals if you can demonstrate that you are a danger to self or others or gravely disabled. Many people have learned to use the mental health system as a way to get needed services and an SSI check. Unfortunately, it creates a dependency that traps a person into investing most of their energy into illness and malingering.

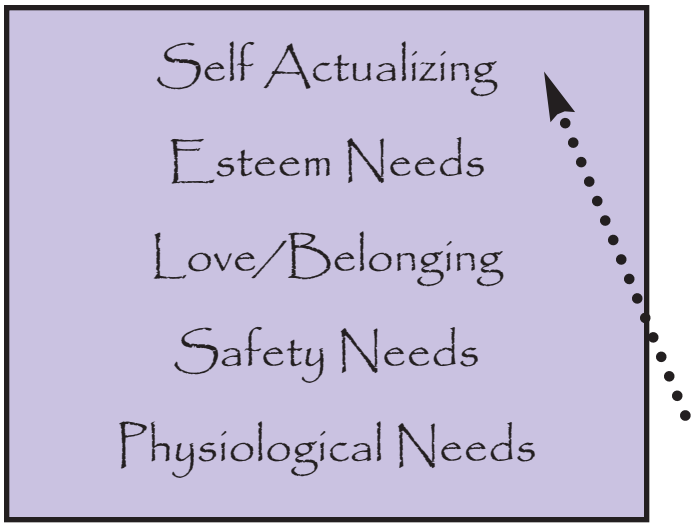
There is enormous diversity among homeless veterans, and they defy simple categorization. Most veteran organizations and programs in the 1980s were designed for men, and up until recently, women veterans have been systematically disenfranchised. The early years of Stand Down were characterized by hundreds of female dependents, but very few women veterans. During the 1989 Stand Down, we asked our women veterans for guidance and strategies to reach out to others who had served their country but were now homeless. We provided an exclusive billeting tent for women veterans that was separate from female dependents and made sure it was facilitated by a woman veteran volunteer. We started with two courageous women veterans in 1988; this year we had over 50.

PHILOSOPHY:

I believe in programs that empower people, and that given the right set of conditions all of us will move towards equilibrium. Stand Down is intended to be an intervention. The chronology of the program philosophy is well described by Abraham Maslow's Need Hierarchy: As lower order needs are satisfied, an individual can address each successive higher order need. But if a lower order need is not met, a person is unable to progress, and, in the case of someone living on the street, may find themselves trapped in "just trying to survive." When veterans first enter Stand Down their most basic physiological needs for food, shelter and sleep are immediately addressed and they are able to move towards establishing emotional and physical safety within the first day. The tent groups and greater community are designed to promote a sense of belonging, and an unconditional acceptance, which leads inevitably to an increase in esteem. By the third day of Stand Down, members are working together to achieve individual and group goals and move beyond their painful self absorption. They support fellow participants and the larger community and begin to actualize their potential to move towards success and stability.

Model of Psychological Health

Abraham Maslow
(1908-1970)



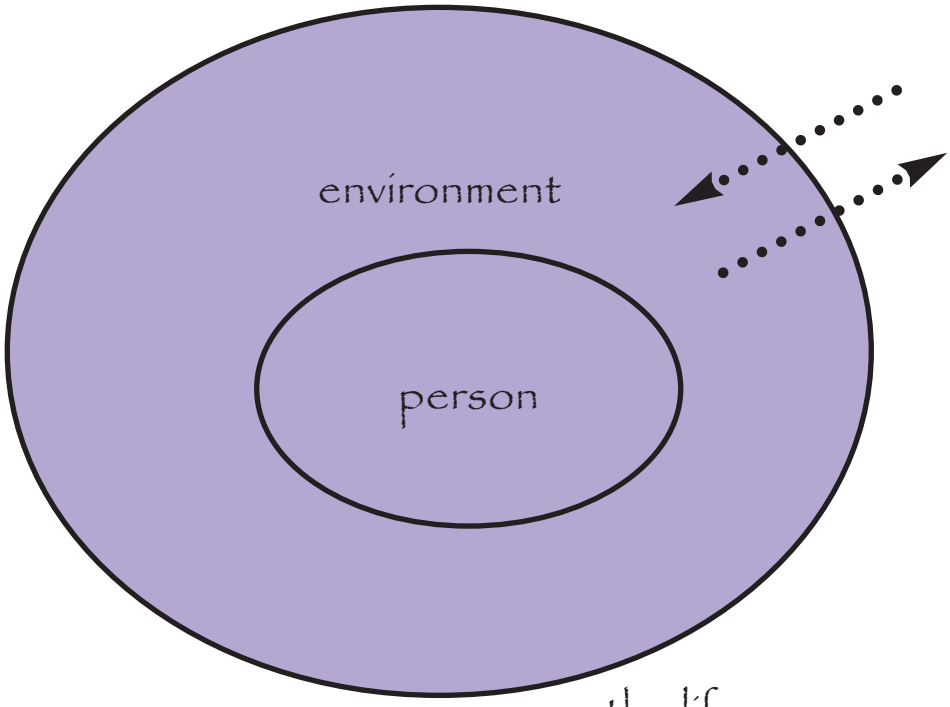
Hierarchy of Needs

The potential for any program to have an effect on its participants and volunteers is explained by Kurt Lewin's Field theory and his now famous formula: B = f (P x E) (behavior is a function of person and environment). That is, all behavior (thinking, feeling, acting) can be altered by any changes in the physical and human environment. At Stand Down we work to create a healing, empowering environment designed to evoke the healthiest parts of people. It grows out of a conviction that all of us are made up of many parts and a healthy environment will, by necessity, elicit the healthiest part of each person. If Carl Rogers (Person-Centered Therapy) believed that people have a natural inclination to move towards health, why not stack the deck with an environment calculated to bring out their best.

Behavior is a Function of Person & Environment

$B = f(P \times E)$

Kurt Lewin
(1890-1947)

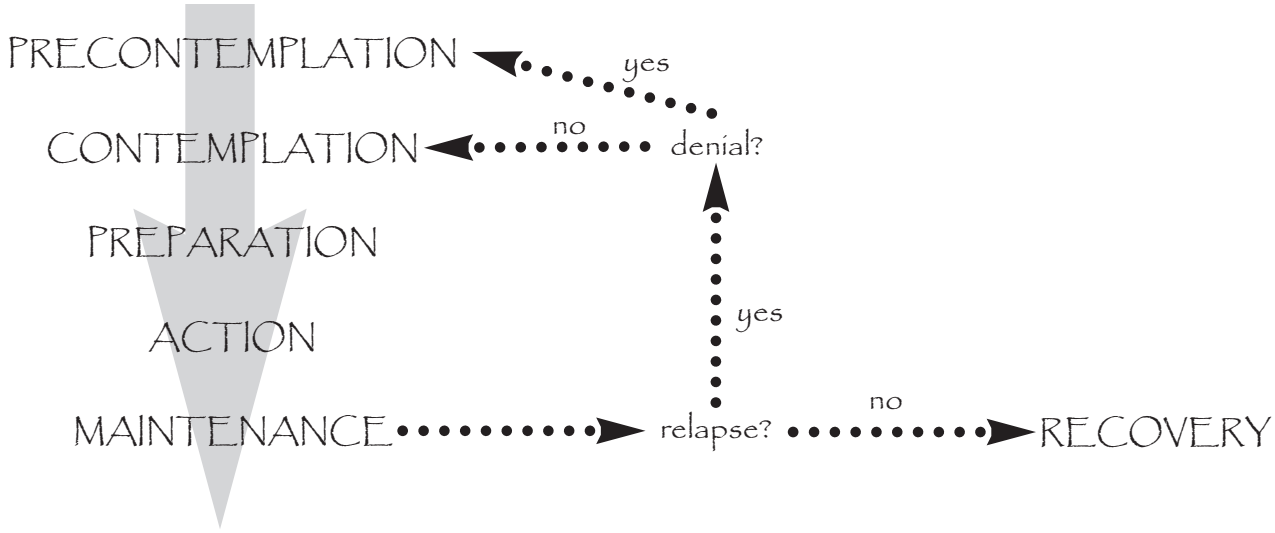


"If you truly want to understand something,
try to change it." - Lewin

Addiction - Stages of Change:

Many homeless veterans are trapped in a struggle with addiction and relapse that undermines any chance of reaching escape velocity from life on the street. The Transtheoretical Model of Behavior Change (TTM), suggested by James Prochaska and Carlo DiClemente (1983), recognizes that effective behavior change occurs through a series of dynamic stages. Interventions can be strategically designed to target the person at their current stage of recovery, rather than a traditional one size fits all approach to addiction treatment.

The five stages of the TTM paradigm describe change as a process that begins with precontemplation, when a person is unwilling to alter addictive behavior or insists that their behavior is acceptable. A person moves to the contemplation stage when they begin thinking about changing their behavior, but are not ready to make a commitment. They may have tried in the past and failed. In the preparation stage, a person is ready to initiate change and needs support with goal setting and implementation. Preparation leads to action with active sobriety and finally, the maintenance stage, which is a life-long commitment to recovery and relapse prevention.



At Stand Down, we use the program and the community to move participants to the preparation and action stages, while reinforcing maintenance in those already in recovery. Veterans enter the event at varying levels of each of the 5 TTM stages. The peer program is designed so that those who are further along (participants and/or volunteers) become important role models and change agents for those stuck at precontemplation. Recovery is central to the Stand Down philosophy.

The Field:

The physical layout of the participants' tents is a basic horseshoe with the stage set down near the center. The tents face each other across an open common area like homes circling a park. There is natural movement throughout the common area, where people can eat together with their tent group, and gather for formal and informal meetings. The stage becomes the village center and a focal point for activity, entertainment and community. The Stand Down field with its flags, camouflage netting, water buffaloes and canvas tents is designed to evoke memories of serving in the US military - a time when veterans experienced feelings of pride and accomplishment and a youthful sense of hope about the future.
When the Stand Down field is most effective, participants are moved into the altered state of being proud veterans, rather than being homeless veterans. The field is a critical element in the transformational potential of the Stand Down program.

Volunteers:

Stand Down is a wonderful opportunity for people to give something back to their community, and we have worked with thousands of amazing volunteers over the last 19 years in San Diego. Each volunteer, no matter what their assigned role, understands that the mission goes well beyond providing serv-

ices. Each one of us has enormous potential to heal others and our mantra of dignity and respect for everyone is nonnegotiable. Just being there to listen – while serving food in the Chow Line, or making rounds as Security, or finding the right size in the clothing tent, or giving someone a haircut, or restocking a portapotti – it's all healing.

I've learned the importance of setting the right tone during the event to help our volunteers let go of their usual stress. One example I call Stand Down Time, which is simply that we will follow the schedule exactly as it is written. If the schedule says lunch is at noon, whatever time we finally eat will be noon. My Logistics Coordinator, Ron Stark, added another element. If someone needs tables or chairs, etc., they will have them in 10 minutes. Which means, whenever these items arrive it will have been 10 minutes. I invented Stand Down Time to have the freedom to innovate within the program spontaneously and to defend against people who kept telling me something was late or too early, but it seems to help everyone relax and it has become a welcome part of the culture.

We have volunteers that plan their annual vacation time from work so they can return to Stand Down year after year. Their commitment and consistency are critical to the ongoing success of Stand Down in San Diego, and we've all

become a great team. Our fastest growing segment of volunteers are former participants, who have gotten off the street and return in a new leadership role. These formally homeless veterans continue to enrich the program and are helping us grow a culture, modeled on hope. They recently started an organization – The National Stand Down Alumni Association – with the mission of creating a year-round support system for homeless veterans.

THE PROGRAM

The typical homeless veteran entering Stand Down for the first time can be described as angry, anxious, hopeless, suspicious, alienated, and often inebriated. The goal of the program is to quickly resolve these issues so that real growth and healing can begin.

Tent Groups:

The heart of the program is the community and its potential for relieving isolation, raising self esteem, providing social support and activating motivation in its members. Each entering veteran is assigned to a 25-person tent at registration that will become their primary support group throughout the event. These groups serve an important logistical purpose, while immediately relieving the isolation characteristic of homelessness.

These Tent Groups are facilitated by two volunteers, typically a mental health professional matched up with a veteran who graduated from a previous Stand Down and who is no longer homeless. The tent group is intended to become the family for each participant – an arena for resolving issues and conflicts that emerge during the event. They live together, eat together and typically form a tight bond in a short period of time.

Tent Leaders keep discussions in the here and now whenever possible, so that their time together can be used productively. People are encouraged to take responsibility for their current circumstances, rather than blaming others or predicting their own failure based on past experience. The emphasis is on the participants themselves initiating change. We avoid the perception that the veteran is a passive recipient of services and design the program to foster hope, empowerment, connection and dignity. Powerlessness keeps people immobilized and homeless. Prior to Stand Down, the volunteer tent leaders participate in a didactic-experiential orientation that reviews relevant elements

of group process, active listening, crisis management, as well as the philosophical components of the program.

Squad Leaders:

After lunch, on the first day of Stand Down, each tent group elects two of its members to be Squad Leaders to assist the tent leaders in managing the group and seeing to its needs, especially at night when the tent leaders go home. This is a critical part of the program, because it promotes homeless veterans into the Stand Down leadership, and empowers the entire community. The most difficult, outspoken participants often make the best squad leaders, because they can focus their energy in a positive direction, rather than pulling against the program. As the director, I work more closely with the squad leaders for management of the event than my volunteer tent leaders, who now assume a more supportive role, and the community advances to another level. With this shared leader function the program has greater potential to evolve beyond an us vs. them and become a life transforming event.

Security:

Security at Stand Down is provided by volunteers, most of whom are young, active duty military personnel. They are provided with an orange hat and vest

and a two-way radio. That's all. We have security everywhere, but their role is to treat all participants with respect and to overwhelm potential or emerging acting out with a large show of gentle, forceful presence; to be flexible in all dealings but firm; and never to place themselves or others in harm's way. They always back off, while physically isolating an angry veteran from others. They are trained to give lots of room for an agitated person to get it out, wear down and lose momentum. However, if someone needs to be ushered off the site, it's accomplished without hesitation. This system works very well. In 19 years of Stand Down, we've never had a major security problem – no fights and no violence. The Stand Down community doesn't tolerate disruption by any of its members and the role of our security force volunteers can be closer to museum docent than police officer.

Spirituality is an important aspect of Stand Down, but it is in no way a mandatory part of the program. We have a Chaplain's Tent located among our billeting tents at the middle-most position in the top of our horseshoe formation. Our Chaplains are available round-the-clock and the tent is a great place to hang out and talk or to get a free Bible. There is a Catholic Mass, a Jewish Sabbath service, a Moslem service and a nondenominational Christian service that are scheduled to occur at the Chaplain's Tent at appropriate times during the event.

Workshops:

Workshops at Stand Down are typically one hour, taught by knowledgeable volunteers from the community and intended to introduce participants to a variety of relevant topics (e.g. veteran benefits, relapse prevention, Gulf War Syndrome, homeless hygiene and foot care, etc.). Morning workshops are re-

peated in the afternoon, so that each participant can attend two different sessions. Our workshop format is modeled somewhat on a professional conference, with participants encouraged to be good consumers and to work to get what they need from each presentation.

A workshop on PTSD is available for combat veterans and is facilitated by a representative from the Veterans Outreach Center (Vet Center). The PTSD workshop provides an overview of symptoms, a review of available resources and a description of the Vet Center program. It is intended to motivate isolated veterans to become part of the greater veteran community and to seek out appropriate treatment. The Vet Center therapist will typically schedule assessment appointments with identified participants for the week after Stand Down. Treatment plans in the Vet Center may include individual, family or group therapy.

Formal trauma therapy would be counter-indicated at a three-day Stand Down, and most participants who would benefit are struggling with substance abuse and are best served by a period of detoxification. We make every effort to identify the combat veterans among our participants and access them to the Vet Center program for follow-up.

Kid's Zone:

Since its inception, Stand Down has had an activity program exclusively for the children of participants. Our intention is to provide a full, meaningful schedule for children, and free up their parents to participate entirely in the

Stand Down program. Our Kid's Zone tent has developed a little more each year, and now we bring in approximately 60 children - infants to 17 years old. We provide toys, games, activities and a special program for teens with supervision from some wonderful volunteers.

Homeless Court:

The second day of Stand Down is especially significant because of our Homeless Court, which is designed to adjudicate misdemeanors and sentence veterans to community service and recovery in lieu of jail time. The Homeless Court came into existence after the first Stand Down in 1988, when the participants rated their legal issues as a fundamental concern in an exit survey. The program began in 1989, and, for the first time in America, successfully brought the courtroom to the people. The Homeless Court program, under the leadership of Steve Binder, has moved beyond its birth place at Stand Down and has become a highly successful national program.

Recovery:

One of the most enduring features of Stand Down for veterans is the Recovery hour that is scheduled the same time each day. This is the one pe-

riod during Stand Down when everything ceases, and everyone, including volunteers, attends a recovery meeting that most closely meets their needs. We provide a broad menu of meetings that include the traditional AA, CA, NA, ACA and meetings that are designed to strengthen existing support systems like Women's AA, Hispanic AA and African-American AA. We have an additional recovery meeting called stress reduction for partici-

pants who do not have an addiction or who may still be in denial. There's another unique meeting called Triple Threat, which is an important part of recovery at Stand Down. Triple Threat is based on the 12-Step AA/NA model and it is designed for combat veterans struggling with issues related to alcohol abuse, drug abuse and their wartime experience. This meeting is exclusively for combat veterans and is run by its own members. Triple Threat has been meeting and supporting veterans since 1982.

We place emphasis on the importance of attending recovery meetings at Stand Down because they have the potential to be far more indelible than an ordinary meeting. Many veterans, over the years, have begun their abstinence at a Stand Down and have returned the following year to celebrate their sobriety with the community. On the final day of the event, volunteers

and participants who have maintained their sobriety from a previous Stand Down are invited onto the stage to be recognized. We strongly encourage participation at 12-step meetings, but we approach it from another direction. I have always wanted to make it cool to be in recovery, because that's what influences many of us. At Stand Down we make a huge production over anyone who got into recovery at a previous Stand Down and has maintained their sobriety over the years. We call them our Stand Down Babies, and we bring them up on stage so they can speak to the community

about their success. It's the community itself that works on its members, and I've learned to trust that process. After 19 years of this program our stage is packed with men and women who are a model of successful recovery.

Community:

An underlying theme at Stand Down is the creation of a Community to strengthen, support and mobilize each of its individual members. We use tent groups to build families and Town Meetings to bring all the families together to optimize this support and strength. There are some strategic times during the event when a Town Meeting is most productive. For exam-

ple, immediately after lunch on the second day, participants are feeling safer and can better tolerate sitting with a large group of people. We use this time to allow federal, state and local dignitaries to address us and for the associated media briefing to occur. Most homeless veterans are surprised and pleased that important people are interested in them and this Town Meeting can be a particularly validating event. Two other Town Meetings occur on the last day and are of particular importance.

Open Mic:

Open Mic invites any participant to come to the stage and to address the entire community over the public address system. The participants pass on what they have learned and express their gratitude; it is a very powerful and humbling experience.

I've learned that if we can create a safe, therapeutic space, participants and volunteers will come together and do the rest. Whenever someone complains that some possession has been lost or stolen, I let the community know from the stage that we need help to find this item. This will happen 3 or 4 times each year at Stand Down. We always find the missing purse or cell phone, etc., and I get on the mic and thank everyone with the underlying message that Stand Down is a special place and you are special people.

I remember an event that I now call the parable of the blankets. One Friday night in July, it was unusually cold and we only had enough blankets for one per person including children. I was told there were more blankets, but they were being saved for the winter shelter. I asked that all the blankets be brought on site, and we'll see what happens. We gave out every blanket we had. Sunday morning I announced simply that the blankets were theirs to keep, but if they had any they didn't need, we could use them this winter. The squad leaders began bringing stacks and stacks of blankets to the stage. We

made a wall of stacked blankets across the back of the stage for everyone to see. We received back more blankets than we had handed out all three days. We got blankets that people had carried around for years and the blankets looked it, but it was an opportunity for them to give something back. Sometimes you have to give something away so that it can come back to you as a gift.

Graduation:

The Graduation ceremony brings the entire community together to witness and celebrate each participant's successful completion of the program. It is a powerful event that must be experienced to be truly appreciated. Tent

groups march up single file carrying flags to pass in front of the stage with bagpipes and snare drums playing in the background. Each veteran is presented an official Stand Down hat and graduation button to thunderous applause. When all the tent groups have been acknowledged and returned to stand in front of their tents, we all gather in an enormous circle of about one thousand strong. We spend a of couple moments to acknowledge the powerful three days together. We are no longer homeless veterans and volunteers, but one community.

Volunteer Debriefing:

The final part of the program is the volunteer debriefing that occurs once the event has ended and the participants have left the site. Typically, we all sit in a circle and review our experiences, but we postpone our critique for another time. The best use of the debriefing at the completion of Stand Down is for support and validation of all the work that was done. It's also a time to acknowledge the inevitable sadness that volunteers experience as they watch veterans leave Stand Down and walk off the field.

CONCLUSION

Evaluation:

Over the years there have been a number of attempts to evaluate the success of Stand Down. We have examined the number of people who have found jobs and housing and recovery, but the essence of what comes out of the event is difficult to capture. As Albert Einstein once said, "Not every-

thing that counts can be counted. Not everything that can be counted counts." A criticism that I heard repeatedly in the early years of Stand Down is that we see a lot of the same people every year. It's true. It took a few more years to see those people come back as volunteers and we learned to say, "not everyone gets it the first few times." This early criticism of Stand Down was to become its enduring strength. Stand Down attracts people year after year – not just participants, but volunteers as well. The Stand Down culture has grown and its impact is more powerful than ever. First time participants are now looking up to their formerly homeless peers as role models. At Stand Down, it's cool to be a successful alumni, and that is a very persuasive intervention.

Assessment at Stand Down is really about self-assessment. The altered state induced by the event is designed to compel veterans to take a step back from their lives and reflect on their journey. Self assessment is based on: "who am I," "where do I want to go from here" and "what's in my way." Participants are collecting this important data in their tent groups, in 12-step meetings, in workshops and motivational lectures and in casual conversations anywhere on the field. The here-and-now focus of the tent group encourages self disclosure and feedback once the trust level has been

established and the group has become cohesive. For some veterans, Stand Down becomes a three-day marathon encounter group.

Final Thoughts:

Homeless veterans at Stand Down are getting younger. In 2005 in San Diego, we had five veterans straight from the current war in Iraq, and I expect that number to grow considerably in spite of all we've learned from previous wars. Many of this year's participants will be the volunteers welcoming Iraqi veterans in the future, and unfortunately the cycle continues.

Stand Down was never intended to solve the problem of veteran homelessness. At best, it's a catchment area for people to be stabilized and introduced to longer term programs. But sometimes magic happens and a person righteously turns their life around in three days. That's my real goal with this program – to find a way to make this magic happen for the greatest number of people ... and maybe one day we'll all show up to do a Stand Down and there will be no participants, because everyone will be there to volunteer.

APPENDIX

This appendix provides an outline of background information and procedual items you should take into account when planning and executing a Stand Down, including a sample budget. This information is from the Vietnam Veterans of San Diego Stand Down a Step by Step Procedural Manual. The manual is available to view on NCHV's website at http://www.nchv.org/guides.cfm, and provides an in depth description of the entire procedure behind planning and running a Stand Down.

I. What is Stand Down?

A. Rationale - Why homeless veterans need a Stand Down
B. History - Creation of the first Stand Down for homeless veterans
C. Stand Down goals
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E. Summary

II. Developing your own Stand Down - A thinking map

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B. Setting the date(s)
C. First steps
D. There's method in this madness

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H. Outreach, pre-registration and registration forms

IV. Creating an infrastructure that promotes community

A. Site layout and site map
B. Logistics calendar
C. Site health and safety preparations
    1. Site liability insurance
    2. Police clearance

3. Health department inspection/clearance
4. Fire permit

D. Site security
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1. Electrical power
2. Sanitation and showers
3. Water
4. Trash management

F. Site communications
1. Signs
2. Flags
3. Telephone hookup
4. Command tent personnel
5. Two-way radios
6. Staging and PA system
7. Fax/copier

G. Requirements for service provider tents and common areas
1. Tables and chairs
2. Phones and other office equipment

H. Site management
1. Parking
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2. Training tent leaders

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4. Management of non-participants
5. Assistance to non-veterans

6. Preparation of a database

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   1. Selecting squad leaders
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H. Clothing
I. Haircuts
J. Visits to site services
K. Town meetings
L. Workshops
M. Recovery groups
N. Sunday morning spiritual service
O. Entertainment
P. Open mic
Q. Graduation
R. Stand Down hats

VI. Onsite services

A. Medical, dental, and vision services
B. Mental health services
C. Women veteran services
D. Significant others
E. Children's services
F. Chaplain services
G. Legal services
H. Employment services
I. Social services
J. DVA benefits (including photo IDs)
K. Social Security benefits
L. IRS and state franchise tax board

VII. Moving off the street and on with life

A. Transitioning to residential recovery programs
B. Overflow and aftercare program

VIII. Program evaluation

A. Participant survey
B. Volunteer debriefing

C. Service provider evaluation
D. Statistics

IX. Budget planning

Estimating and covering the cost of your Stand Down may be very difficult the first time out. As a community sponsored, volunteer event, the expectation is that the bulk of expenses will be absorbed as direct and in-kind donations to support homeless veterans. It has been our experience, however, that there are typical “hard costs” for infrastructure services that derive from sources with no particular connection to the military or sympathy for homeless veterans. These may include: electrical usage, phone usage, tent rental, grounds rental, cot rental, sanitation (port-a-potties, sinks, etc.), refuse disposal, stationery and copy paper, paper goods (plates, cups, etc.), ice, refrigeration truck, drinking water, two-way radios, and personal care items.

This is a representative, but by no means exhaustive, list. The exact cost for each of these will be determined by local rates and the size of your Stand Down and related amount of usage.

Another very expensive item, again related to the size of your Stand Down and number of volunteers, is a Stand Down logo imprinted hat. While a hat may not be regarded as essential, receiving the hat has become a source of pride for participants and volunteers alike. Even at a very low unit cost of $2.50 or so, it becomes a high ticket item to provide 1200-2000 hats.

Our advice is to establish a preliminary budget very conservatively, i.e., assuming you will have to pay cash for infrastructure and “goodies” such as hats. Then whittle away at it by aggressively soliciting donations.

Vietnam Veterans of San Diego
Stand Down 2001

SUPPORT & REVENUES		
DONATIONS REVENUE	$	33,953.03
FUNDRAISING REVENUES		5,898.00
TOTAL SUPPORT & REVENUES	$	39,851.03
EXPENSES		
EQUIPMENT RENT/LEASE		117.50
STAND DOWN MAINTENANCE		6,655.17
EQUIPMENT REPAIR & MAINT		38.83
UTILITIES		334.48
TELEPHONE		2,352.72
FOOD		6,444.99
KITCHEN SUPPLIES		1,527.51
SUPPORTIVE SERVICES		16,659.39
GAS FOR THE VANS		228.90
PRINTING COSTS		364.41
OFFICE SUPPLIES		681.24
POSTAGE & SHIPPING		330.00
HOUSEHOLD SUPPLIES		197.93
MINOR EQUIPMENT PURCHASES		1,100.41
LICENSES & PERMITS		1,560.00
PROGRAM ADVERTISING		268.75
TOTAL EXPENSES	$	38,862.23
NET GAIN		988.80

Note: This schedule does not include donated goods and services for Stand Down.